A

SERMON

23

Preach'd before the

King and Queen,

Upon Ephes. 5. 16.

Redeeming the Time, because the days are evil.

By the Reverend Father *Philip Ellis* Monk of the H. Order of St. *Benedict*, and of the *English* Congr. Chaplain and Preacher in Ordinary to their Majesties.

Published by His Majesties Command.

LONDON,

Printed by *Henry Hills*, Printer to the King's most Excellent Majesty, for His Houshold and Chapel, 1687.

Ephes. 5. 16.

Redimentes tempus, quoniam dies mali sunt.

Redeeming the Time, because the days are evil.

IF this great Apostle (Sacred Majesty,) command all who were to succeed him in the Apostolical Office, and in the care of Souls, *to Preach the Word in season & out of season*; certainly, this which I have chosen, or rather which is recommended this day by the Church to your particular consideration, and is delivered by Him as a Compendium of Morality, is ever *in Season*, and ever in the *Crisis*: The management of our *Time*, being like the Dictates of our Conscience, in no circumstance to be neglected, being in the number of those Precepts which admit of no dispensation.

For *Time* being in a continual *Flux* and *Motion*, every particle of it which is not *improv'd* is *lost*; but, blessed be God, not lost beyond *Redemption*, for what is impossible to Nature is possible to Grace; what all the industry of Man

cannot retrieve, nor the Wealth of both the *Indies* recover, the pooreſt and weakeſt Chriſtian is taught how to Redeem: *Redeem the Time.*

Should a Merchant ſee that Veſſel ſink before his Eyes which was laden with all his Hopes, and almoſt all his Wealth, where he had treaſur'd up the labors of his *paſt* life, the comforts of his *preſent*, and the unknown joys of his *future* happineſs; yet amidſt his Agonies ſhould hear one promiſing to repair his loſs with the ſmall remainder of his Fortune; how greedily would he embrace the offer, and hearken to the expedient? Should an Eminent Lawyer whiſper a young Spend-thrift in the ear, that he will put him into a method how to redeem a morgag'd and imbeſled Eſtate, and this without any coſt or charges, and even any advantage to himſelf; Would not he look upon this Man as his better Genius, not only as the moſt charitable, but alſo the moſt friendly Perſon in the World, and follow his counſel in deſpite of all their reaſonings and diſſuaſives, who encourage his profuſeneſs, and lend a helping hand to his ruin? Should the *Captive* be taught how to recover his *Liberty*, the *Conquered* his *Honor*, the *Stigmatiz'd* and *Scandalous* his *Reputation*, or the *Malefactor* how to gain his *Judge*, and compound for the *greateſt Crimes* with the *ſmalleſt Puniſhment*;

I pre-

I presume much Rhetoric would not be necessary to win their attention. Now this is what I come to offer you, and what the *Apostle* exhorts you to: But methinks, Exhortation should be needless where Self-interest pleads so strong; and I should have nothing to do, but to shew you the *practical Part*, were all Men agreed in the *Thesis*. But most People know not the true price of *Time*, know not how to spend it when they have it, or how to go about to redeem it when it is mis-spent.

Wherefore, *the true value of Time*; *the great abuse of it*, *and the most excellent manner of redeeming it*; I beg leave, may be the Subject of the two following Parts of my Discourse, after we have implor'd the Divine Assistance, by the Intercession of the Virgin Mother, *Ave Maria.*

Redeem the Time, *because the days are evil.*

St. *Aug.* in his 24th Sermon upon the words of the Apostle, observes there are two things which render *our days evil*, the *misery* and the *wickedness* of Men. But since misery is only the punishment of wickedness, and wickedness the cause of misery, it is the mis-spending and not redeeming our Time, which denominate the days evil: Mis-spending, relates to the present, and to the

the future when it becomes preſent; not redeeming, regards what is paſt; ſo that both together infect the whole Stream, and render our days guilty of a double iniquity. For it is no ſmall aggravation of every ſin, (tho ſo little reflected on, and made ſo light of by People now a-days,) that in the *perpetration* of evil is included the *omiſſion* of doing well; that the ſame parcels of Time we dedicate to *Vice*, ought to be conſecrated to the exerciſe of *Vertue*; that the contrary practice, beſides its proper and ſpecifick wickedneſs, is guilty of Injuſtice and Robbery. In fine, That in the day of Judgment a ſeparate account will be demanded of what we *have*, and what we *have not* done. This is evident from the Bill which ſhall be brought in and found againſt the Delinquent, and is already declar'd by our Bleſſed Lord, *Mat.* 25. where every Article of the Inditement is Negative, *You did not feed me, you did not cloath me, you did not viſit me*, and the reſt. But here is not alledg'd ſo much as the breach of a Commandment; then Irreligion, Luxury, Detraction and Extortion are ſmaller Crimes, which will bear no Action. But ſince leſſer Articles cannot ſuperſede the greater, it follows, Theſe are upon another Rule, unleſs ſuch groſs offenders ſhall be ranged with Infidels, *who are already judg'd*, and carry their Sentence in their

their Faces, *jam judicati ſunt.* But for the reſt of Chriſtians, who think themſelves innocent becauſe they abſtain from theſe blacker Crimes, it is neceſſary another Inditement ſhould be prepar'd, ſetting forth the Omiſſion of good Works, and convicting them of miſpending their Time, which, as appears from our Saviours words, is alone ſufficient to plunge them into everlaſting Flames, *Quia non feciſtis.* Therefore, *becauſe you did not*, for no other reaſon, *go you curſed into everlaſting Fire.*

And after all this, amidſt ſo much knowledge in a Point which concerns us ſo highly, and which we firmly believe, is it not a Subject rather of Tears than of Expoſtulation and Diſcourſe, that nothing is ſo little conſider'd by Man, as the true value of Time? I know the Divine, the Philoſopher, the Lawyer, the Trades-man, and even the Libertine unanimouſly agree that Time is the moſt pretious thing in the World, but all of them upon different *Motives.* The Philoſopher prizes it in order to Science, the Lawyer manages it to improve his Fortune, the Trades-man to procure a Subſiſtence, the Libertine to indulge his Appetites, but the Divine teaches it to be only valuable, as leading to an happy Eternity. To value Time upon the account of Speculation, is meerly Heatheniſh; to value it for a Temporal advan-

advantage, is meerly Human; *hæc Gentes requirunt*; to value it for the abuſe of it, is diabolical; but to value it for the true end, is the eſtimate of a Chriſtian. Wherefore, all the manegery of Time, or rather the applying of it otherwiſe than to the true end, for which it was given, and to which it naturally tends *i. e.* to Eternity, is an unjuſt alienation, becauſe it turns the Means into the end, and fruſtrates the Deſign of God and Nature.

It is not my buſineſs to ſubtilize upon the nature of *Time*, or Metaphyſically enquire what it is, whether *the revolution of the Heavens*, or *the meaſure of the motion and reſt of Bodies*, or *a particle of Eternity which we now uſe*, as the Orator calls it? Let us leave this diſquiſition to Philoſophers. There is a certain *Definition* which every Chriſtian carries in his Breaſt, that it is a Term aſſign'd us by Providence, to work out our Salvation in it. This *Term* is diverſify'd according to the ſeveral Men it affects; and what is many Years to one, is but a few Months, or Days, or Hours to another. Yet this ſhorter Period, is a Mans whole Time, his whole Courſe; as the Moon and other Planets compleat their Revolution and fulfil their Motion, as well as the Sun and Superior Heavens, which are much longer in performing theirs. Wherefore, it is a

Cic. l. 1. de Invent. Rhet.

ſtrange

aſtrange Folly, and little leſs than Impiety; which is ſo common in every bodies mouth, that ſuch an one came to an untimely end, or was cut off in the Flower or middle of his Age, when that very Perſon ſo lamented as unripe for the Sythe, had liv'd out his *whole time* as well as *Mathuſalem*; and ſo has the Infant who is taken in the Womb, or having *but one day upon the Earth*, as much as *the Child of an hundred years*, as the Scripture moſt properly ſtiles thoſe who end their days in ſuch Puerilities as they began them, with as little conſideration why they came into the World, what they are to do in it, what Account will be demanded after it; Their Divertiſements and what they call Pleaſures, being as ſilly, and wanting nothing of the Child, but *Innocence.*

But if it be agreed on, that *Time is pretious*, what Frenzy has ſeiz'd Mankind, and makes them ſo laviſh of what they eſteem ſo dear? What Spirit makes us ſo fond and careful of Temporal advantages, ſo greedy of what is not our own, and ſo negligent of the thing which only belongs to us? For as *Seneca* and St. *Bernard* admirably obſerve, all other things are Foreign, nothing is properly ours, but Time: Or ſuppoſing other things to be never ſo much our own; yet the value of Time ought in

Omnes ſi quidem res alienæ a nobis eſt, tempus autem noſtrum eſt. Bern. l. Medit. c. 6. Senec.

reaſon to be greater than the eſtimation of what we only owe to Time; and who ſquanders it away, tho he pretend to Prudence and Conduct in other matters, can deſerve that ſtile no better, than one who receives his Rents with great exactneſs and circumſpection, but keeps no account how he lays them out; or, another who buſies himſelf about what belongs not to him, or is exact in trivial matters, but neglects the main; like that unfortunate Prince, who valu'd himſelf more upon the touch of the Lute, than the Art of Government.

All other things are Foreign to us, *aliena à nobis ſunt*; they are beneath us; we now and then deſcend to them out of *neceſſity* or for *diverſion*, but the management of Time is the *buſineſs of Man*. This only is our own, but it will not ſtay with us; it is *ſhort* and *ſwift*, properties which inhaunce the value, and ſhew it was given us only for uſe. Part of it ſteals away from us before we reflect upon it, part others ſteal from us; and of that which we are actually uſing, a great deal runs at waſte. For ſetting aſide the Years of our undiſcerning *Childhood*, and inconſiderate *Youth*, and unweldy *Old Age*, only the middle part of our Lives, which hardly make up a fourth, we think worth improving;

improving; and how few arrive to this term? Not the fourth part of Mankind; and of those that do, not the Hundreth part, I am afraid, ever think whereabouts they are, but trifle away the present, which is in their power, to build their hopes upon a future, in which it is at least *probable* they shall have no share, and in which *for certain*, they will be more unfit for labor. But of this riper and more digested part of our Lives, how much is taken up in necessary attendance on our *Bodies* and *Fortunes*, how much consum'd in *rest* and *repasts*, how much in *refreshing the Spirits* and *unbending the Mind?* And of the remainder, which amounts not to above a fifteenth proportion, how much is wasted in Disquisition and Error, and mistaking our business, in idle expectation, fond hopes and unactive fears? And after all this subduction, have we time to spend in useless Discourses, impertinent News, tedious Visits or unprofitable Studies? But it seems we have so much plenty still, that every Sense and Appetite puts in for a share, and wantons away the select and more pretious hours. We have time for Drunkenness, Cheating and Circumventing, Slander and Detraction, Luxury and Murder, and, as if *the wickedness of the day were not sufficient*

for it, we take in great part of the Night. We ſuffer every one, who has a mind to loſe his own time, to make bold with ours; and when all other Injuries and uſurpation of our Goods is preſently inform'd againſt, and proſecuted as far as the Crime will bear, even to death, for a Garment or a ſmall Sum of Mony; there is no Man brings an Action againſt the Aggreſſor that *robs us of ſo much time* in formal Viſits or unprofitable Diſcourſe, nay, we are not ſenſible he has done us any wrong; but ſoon after we grow weary of the *reſt*, and prepare to do the ſame injury to others, inviting them to ſpend an hour in this or that divertiſement. *To ſpend an hour?* (cries St. *Bernard*,) *Do you know what you ſay! To ſpend an hour, which the mercy of your Creator has indulg'd you to do Penance, to obtain Pardon, to acquire Grace and purchaſe Glory?* O donec pertranſeat tempus! *To paſs the time away in which you ought to appeaſe the Divine Juſtice, to haſten towards an Angelical Purity, to bewail your paſt offences*; the Evangelical Treaſure which you ought to buy with the expence of all you have. To ſpend the time! O abſurdity of ſpeech! O ſtupidity of mind! To quicken the ſpeed of Time, which is ever upon the wing, and cannot be perſwaded to ſtay with us. If we manage our Time

to

to ſo much advantage, what pity it is we are confin'd to ſo ſmall a compaſs, and our lives crowded into ſo narrow a ſpace! Great pity indeed, that Men, who Husband a little ſo well, have not a larger Fortune to improve! a ſad thing, that from amidſt theſe laudable Exerciſes one muſt be ſnatch'd away on a ſuddain, as if our Induſtry and Application had not merited a longer term!

But, Chriſtians, let us once in our lives be ſerious, and conſider in cold Blood what we are doing, whiles ſo great a Treaſure ſlips between our fingers! Let us once in our lives tell true, and ingenuouſly confeſs what we are driving at, what we hope to gain by ſo prodigious and irrecoverable an Expence? I dare not tell you St. *Bernards* opinion of your Proceedings, That all the time you have not God before your eyes, is to be reckon'd as loſt: *Omne tempus in quo de Deo non cogitas, hoc te computes perdidiſſe.* But this I am bold to affirm, that all Time not ſpent in order to Eternity, is miſ-ſpent; if employed only upon things *indifferent*, it is to be accounted for, if upon things *criminal*, it is to be ſatisfy'd for, if it be not redeem'd; and even thoſe Actions which paſs for the moſt *innocent*, when not directed to the right end, become defective, and in ſome meaſure criminal; *Bern. in Declam.*

criminal; nay, even things neceſſary, when they exceed the limits of neceſſity, are put to the account of miſ-ſpending. I need not ſpeak of Time ſpent in thoſe things, which even the corruption of this Age, with all its gloſſes cannot Varniſh over, which appear in their own Colours, do what we can, and condemn us while they are acting. I need not ſpeak of Time ſpent in ſantring up and down, hearing or relating News, Dancing, Gaming, which have not any other end than a ſhort refreſhment of the Spirits, beyond which, they are amuſements, which we tolerate in Children, and nothing but want of Reaſon can excuſe; For aſſure your ſelves, want of Reflection in a riper Age will not do it; for how can Not-Reflecting excuſe us, when Ignorance it ſelf ſhall be reputed a Crime, and *he that do's not know, ſhall not be known?*

Now go and tell me your State and Condition will not allow you to ſpend your Time better; if this be ſo, that State of yours deſerves very ill of you; it is unlawful in it ſelf, and therefore to be abandon'd: And methinks, no one ſhould be unwilling to quit that miſerable Servitude where he has not leiſure to be good. But if the State be good, it is ſanctify'd by vertuous Practices; and if you

you ſuperſede that Sanctification, you render that Criminal, which of it ſelf is good and laudable. But the goodneſs of moſt States depends upon the execution of them.

It was a common Saying among the Philoſophers, That every Man is the Artificer of his own Fortune; I am ſure, every one is the Artificer of his own Happineſs, who by co-operating with the Grace and Time which is given him, may improve the moſt ordinary Actions into vertuous and meritorious, or by neglecting this eaſie improvement, render himſelf accountable for the moſt indifferent things.

That Direction of the Apoſtle, *Whether you eat or drink, or whatſoever you do, do all to the Glory of God*, is a Precept (for ſo the Fathers ſtile it,) of a vaſt extent, and reaches not only the more *remarkable*, but alſo takes in the *minuteſt Actions*, and every moment of our Lives. In the Eyes of God a thouſand Years are but a moment, and in the Service of God a moment may be worth a thouſand Years; it may redeem an Age, it may purchaſe an Eternity. Unhappy Man! who neglects a moment, which may render him ſo for ever! *à momento Æternitas*; Eternity depends upon a moment, becauſe Eternity is the end of Time, which is nothing but a Flux of moments; and that fatality

tality which will certainly happen in one, may happen in any one.

And now certainly, I have ſaid enough of the due value of Time, which muſt be preſuppos'd, as well to the appretiation and eſteem of the thing, as to the redeeming of it. If you are ſatisfy'd in the value of it, you cannot but be griev'd to the very heart, that you have parted with it ſo eaſily, paſs'd it over ſo ſlightly, and ſpent it ſo idly and irreligiouſly, and by conſequence, will be very glad to hear how you may redeem it, which is the Subject of my *Second Part.*

Redeem the Time.

The higheſt point of Wiſdom that Man can arrive to by Philoſophy, is to make uſe of his Time when it is in his hands; but to recover it when it is gone, to retrieve it when it is loſt; to rectifie the Errors and Miſcarriages of it when it is no more, is one of thoſe Arcanums of Religion, which are hid from the Wiſe and reveal'd to Babes. It was the Saying of *Pittacus*, celebrated ſo much by Antiquity, and which entitled him to a place among the wiſeſt of Men, γνῶθι καιρόν, *Learn to value your Time*, but *to redeem it* was a Leſſon that

that great Maſter never learn'd himſelf, and became only an Apoſtle of the Church to teach. But who is able to pay ſo great a Ranſom? And what Exchange can one make for his Time, more than for his own Soul? The price is eaſie and obvious, and in every Mans power, *Cautè ambulate*, only *walk warily*, ἀκριβῶς, *circumſpectly* and *watchfully*; do now what before you ought to have done, and a guard upon your Actions for the future, ſhall repair the damages caus'd by your former negligence. But *walking warily*, implies not only a Ceſſation from Evil, but alſo a Repentance of it; To redeem the Time therefore, ſaith St. *Anſelm*, is to redeem the Offences of a Miſ-ſpent Life, with Tears and penitential Works, *Eſt anteactæ vitæ peccata, flendo, & pœnitendo redimere.*

If Sorrow then is a Tear, which cannot recover the ſmalleſt Temporal loſs, ſo valuable in order to Eternity; and do our Hearts remain ſtill without ſenſe, and our Eyes without moiſture? Will amendment for the future croſs the Book? Will an *humble acknowledgment* of the Debt compound with our Adverſary in the way? Will a *preſent diligence*, in performing what is otherwiſe our Duty, attone for ſo much negligence in managing the *Talent* depoſited in our hands? And is the Price thought too dear

with us? Or do we ſtand with our Hands in our Pockets, demurring upon the Bargain? Do's not *Reaſon* as well as *Religion* prompt us to lay hold of it immediately? And ſince the Mercy of our God is ſo liberal, to take him at his word, (as I may ſay,) and enter the Vineyard this very moment, tho at the 9th, tho at the 11th hour, when the ſhort remainder of the time may make up the loſs of all the reſt! Oh! the unſpeakable comforts of this Promiſe! Oh! the incredible ſtupidity of Man! which ſtands unmov'd at ſuch large Invitations, ſuch a general Amneſty, ſuch unexpected Promiſes, as tranſcend not only a reaſonable Hope, but even the boldeſt Preſumption!

Iſa. 21. 12. *The Morning comes*, (ſays the Prophet,) *and alſo the Night*; tho your Day be far ſpent, there is ſtill Time enough to enquire after the means of your Salvation; *Si quæritis, quærite*, *If you ſeek, ſeek in earneſt, return and come*: And that we ſhould not doubt of a merciful Reception, he gives us this aſſurance by another Prophet, *That he will forgive our Iniquity, and that he will remember our ſin no more.* Jer. 31. 34.

Surely, there is ſome unknown Pleaſure and invincible Faſcination in Idleneſs, which cannot be unti'd by ſuch powerful Countercharms as theſe. Cuſtom, (which is but ſtanding Error,)

ror,)has prepoſſeſs'd our Minds,ſtupifi'd and immerſed in Fleſh and Blood; that *to do nothing* is *eaſie*, when indeed it is the greateſt *pain* the reaſonable Creature can endure; arguing either a childiſh *Weakneſs*, that we cannot act, or a ſhameful *Ignorance*,that we know not what to do. And I believe the Man of Reaſon will grant me, that Ignorance, as it is a puniſhment upon us for doing what we ought not, ſo is it the greateſt torment to a Soul, which is perpetually thirſting after Knowledge: And as for the more unthinking and groſſer part of Mankind, they cannot deny, but all Pain comes from Weakneſs. Our own Notions therefore bear teſtimony againſt us; and if what we call a gentile life, ſpeaks either our *Weakneſs* or *Ignorance*, the gentile Liver is the moſt unhappy Creature in the World: For Happineſs is ſo far from conſiſting in either of *theſe*, that both are eſſentially deſtructive to it; and whoſoever hopes to compaſs this end by contrary means, will find himſelf at laſt in the other Extremity. To be plain, whoſoever promiſes Happineſs to himſelf without much labor, ſets it at too high a price, at which no wiſe Man would buy it, if it be not to be purchas'd but by living idly; for at this rate, one muſt be Miſerable to become Happy.

But how unnatural a thing is it for that Creature to be idle, who alone of all Creatures ſtands condemn'd to labor? as St. *Ambroſe* obſerves: Upon which conſideration St. *Baſil* doubts not to brand this Vice of ſo great reputation in the World, with the infamous Character of *a ſin againſt Nature*; becauſe there is nothing in the whole Frame of Nature idle or unactive. Our Bleſſed Saviour teſtifies of the Godhead it ſelf, *My Father* (ſaith he,) *ſtill works, and I work*; *Pater meus uſque modo operatur.* All the Hierarches of Angels (as one aſſures us, who had been in the third Heaven,) *are Adminiſtring Spirits*: The Prophet declares, they have no reſt day nor night; but inceſſantly pour forth their harmonious Acclamation, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabbath:* And what I ſhould have mention'd before, The ſacred Humanity of Chriſt *came not to be ſerv'd, but to ſerve*; *Non venit ut Miniſtraretur, ſed ut Miniſtraret.* The Celeſtial Orbs have never had any reſpite from their perpetual motion; all things below are in a continual Tide, a regular Succeſſion of Cauſes and Effects; *Every Creature groans, and brings forth even till now*, ſaith the Apoſtle: And if *the inviſible things of God are underſtood by thoſe things which are made*, The Operations of Nature are ſo many Emblems of the Diligence he requires at

Ambr. Præf. in Luc. *Baſil. ap. Mel.* 89.

John 5. 17.

at our hands towards the working out our Salvation; God having made them not only for our *uſe*, but alſo for our *inſtruction*. In fine, the whole World is a large Volum, as St. *Anthony* calls it, where we may read our Duty, and meet with it in every line. Nay, if Man would but take the meaſure of his *Moral Actions* from the obſervation of his *Natural*, the continual working of the Heart, circulation of the Blood, reſpiration of the Lungs, pulſe of the Arteries and activity of the Fancy, will teach him Aſſiduity in the exerciſe of thoſe nobler Faculties, whoſe Actions depend upon the liberty of his Will; how conſtant and regular his Motion ought to be in the Service of God; And that his Soul is as much *dead*, when it is idle, and ſurceaſes from doing well, as the Body will be, when all theſe Vital Operations are at an end.

S. *Athanaſ. in Vit. S. Ant.*

I know not any one, who would not eſteem it a horrible Execration, to wiſh he had neither Hands nor Feet; yet, ſuch is our miſery, that while we make no more uſe of them in order to our own good, or that of our Neighbor, than if they were quite diſabled; even in that reſpect we count our ſelves happy: For take away from the Lady, the Gentleman, the Courtier, *&c.* the power and convenience of doing nothing, and *being not in the labors of Men*, the ſubtileſt Logician

Logician can ſcarce explain in what formality, their Happineſs, *i. e.* the advantage of their Condition conſiſts? Their *priviledge* ſeems to lie in an exemption from the general Malediction inflicted upon the reſt of Mankind; *In the ſweat of their brows they ſhall eat their Bread:* But then they muſt draw their Pedegree from ſome other Line than that of *Adam*; for no more is any Child of his free of this Obligation, than he is from the cauſe of it; and if we Inherit the one, we muſt neceſſarily be partakers of the other. For as Holy *Job* expounds this Sentence, *Man is born to labor*; Labor being not only a neceſſary means to preſerve his life, but one of the ends why it was given him. And our Bleſſed Saviour revives and inforces this Doctrin, in the Parable of the Maſter entruſting his Servants with ſo many Talents, with a *Negotiamini*, *Manage and improve them*; and this not for a ſpirt, when the fit takes you, but *donec veniam*, without intermiſſion till he calls *them* in, and *you* to give an account of your Stewardſhip; by which *Servants*, every body underſtands the whole Maſs of Human Nature, without excepting any State or Condition; and by the *Talents*, a neceſſity of working, according to the Abilities this great Maſter has diſpenſed to every particular.

Now

Now if a Man who had well conſider'd the weight and ſtrictneſs of this Obligation, without knowing the Follies of Mankind, and their vain amuſements, ſhould look out into the World, he would tell me, I make a Diſcourſe in the Air, and to the Walls; for every one is active in his reſpective Station, and employ'd in his Duty, when he ſhould ſee their earneſtneſs at ſuch a diſtance, as not to diſcern the matter they are ſo intent upon: How People haſt along the Streets, and preſs one another like Waves, which are broken and ſever'd with a contrary Tide: When he ſhould behold ſome warmly diſputing at a Table, others walking muſing and ſolitary, ſome Reading, others diſcourſing with abundance of Gravity, others ſitting in crowds, in recollection and ſilence; he would certainly bid me hold my peace, and not diſturb theſe ſerious Men, with adviſing them to begin, what they are already doing. But if I ſhould lead him nearer to them, within ken of their Actions, and hearing of their Diſcourſe, when he ſhould diſcover their *Lives* and their *Talk* to be all of a piece, *Atheiſtical* in good earneſt; When he ſhould ſee theſe People running to a Shew or to a Riot, to circumvent their Neighbor, or to oppreſs the Innocent; or courſing about the Streets, meerly to ſhew their

Equipage

Equipage or themſelves: When he ſhould find thoſe ſilent and recollected People at the *Theater*, whom he thought at a Sermon; That Lady at her Glaſs, and in a profound contemplation of her ſelf, whom he thought at her *Oratory*; that Gallant reading a *Romance* or a Novel, which he miſtook for a *Prayer-Book*: When he ſhould hear others talking profanely in the very Church, blaſpheming the Divinity they pretend to worſhip, pretending to Reaſon, and yet practiſing Debauchery. In fine, moſt Men acting and talking after ſuch a manner, that what is counted the moſt innocent Diſcourſe, is *Murther*, I mean, cenſuring their Neighbors Actions, and taking their Lives in pieces, as if they were diſſecting an Anatomy, to diſcover the root of a Diſeaſe.

In a word, When he ſhould be ſatisfy'd, that the plurality of Men is buſied in *unlawful*, or *ſcandalous*, or *trivial* things, and almoſt *all beſides their buſineſs*, he would cry out, They want a Phyſician more than a Divine; and I ſpend my Time as unprofitably as the reſt, with Preaching to Men in a Lunacy.

But if he ſhould be commanded with the Prophet *Ezekiel*, *to pierce the Wall*, and view the *Abominations* that are done within, and *all the Idols of the Houſe of* Iſrael, with the ſeveral

Ezek. 8. 8.

ſorts

ſorts of Adorations which are paid to them; as the avaricious Man ſacrificing his Soul to a little Gain, the voluptuous Man to his ſenſual Appetite, the Vindictive to a brutal Revenge, the Ambitious to the ſhadow of Honor, the Luxurious to the moſt infamous of Paſſion, the Flatterer burning Incenſe to his Prince, and the Hypocrite to his God; he muſt needs conclude that true, what the Jews ſaid in their Conventicle of Vice, *The Lord hath forſaken the Earth*, and the Fear of him is wholly extinguiſh'd.

But if amidſt this Mans aſtoniſhment, one ſhould bid him have a care what he ſays, for theſe are *Chriſtians*, Men who make a Conſcience of their Actions, People of Credit and Honor, who would not do an ill thing for the World, who believe they ſhall account ſeverely for every *idle word*, and every *moment* ſpent unprofitably. In ſhort, That they are *redeeming their Time*, and are heartily ſorry for all their ſins, tho they appear to be actually inflaming the reckoning; that they are executing their Penances, and putting their morning Reſolutions in practice, tho they ſeem to be at the Gaming-houſe, the Theater or Tavern; would not he turn upon me as one of the number of mad Men, or an impudent Cheat, endeavoring to impoſe upon his Senſes, and obtrude the groſſeſt

impoſſibilities, and moſt palpable *contradictions* upon his certain Knowledge and Reaſon?

Yet whether this be not the preſent State of this Nation, I mean, the caſe of moſt People, *Judicate domus* Iſrael, your Judgment, O Houſe of *Iſrael!* If God ſhould once again ſend the Prophet *Jeremy* to ſearch every Street, and enquire out a juſt and ſober Man, *any one who ſeeketh the Truth*, I am perſuaded, he would bring in the ſame Evidence he did before; *Thou haſt ſtricken them, but they have not griev'd; Thou haſt conſumed them, but they have refus'd to hear correction; They have made their faces harder than a Rock, they have refus'd to return.* The more Time thou giveſt them to repent, the more Time thou alloweſt them to ſin; they are ſo far from *redeeming* what is paſt, that there is like to be no end of the Score.

Jerem 5. 1.

But *perhaps they are poor and fooliſh, ignorant of the ways of our Lord, and the Judgments and Law of their God*; Vadam ergo ad Optimates, *I will go therefore to the great*, the moſt knowing and diſcerning Men, the advantage of whoſe *Birth* and *Education* has rais'd them above the Level, and purg'd their Heads from that Groſneſs and Phlegm which ſtupifies the reſt; for *they* cannot but *know the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God*: Sed hi ſimul confregerunt

runt jugum, ruperunt vincula; *But theſe have altogether broken the Yoke, and burſt the Bonds.* At their looking out into the World, their firſt buſineſs is to forget the Religious Education of their tender Age, and to efface the inſtructions of their Parents and Preceptors, by doing every thing they were forbid. The firſt Tincture they receive from the World, is *Vanity*, which as *Job* obſerves, ſoon ripens into Pride, [*Vir vanus in ſuperbiam erigitur,*] and then they *think themſelves born as free and lawleſs as a wild Aſs-colt in the Deſert.* Becauſe they have no neceſſity of ſweating for their Living, they think themſelves *Maſters of their Time*; becauſe Divine Providence has provided ſo largely for them, as to exempt them from the *Drudgery* of the World, and ſet them apart for *nobler Actions*; they think their *Buſineſs* lies only where their *Pleaſures* do. What a frightful Idea have theſe Men of Happineſs, when their own Judgment places them in the State of corrupted and abandon'd Nature, endow'd only with a *liberty to Sin*, or rather in the State of *Damnation*, a *Non-neceſſity* of doing well?

But, my Noble Auditory, how can you entertain ſo mean or cruel a thought of God, as to fancy he has made a Law from which he exempts that ſort of Mankind, which is the *moſt*

able and *beſt qualified* to perform it? Or that he has ſingled out the *beſt part* of his Creation, Men and Women of moſt ſenſe and reaſon, as the fatteſt Victims for Sacrifice, to ſpend their Time in ſilence and idleneſs, and not to be in the labors of Men, aſſigning them no Province, no Soil to cultivate, that they might have no means toward their Reprobation? If this be the end of your Creation, O ye Men of Greatneſs, of Riches and Honors! I cannot but acknowledge with Tears, that you ſo well correſpond with it. But if the *advantage* of your condition conſiſts in a *capacity*, of ſerving God and your Neighbor in a more excellent manner, as well through the great *leiſure* you enjoy, as the *plenty* and *power* you have to do it with, your Time is ſo much more *valuable*, as it may be more *beneficial*; it is more eaſily *redeemed*, by the many *Expedients* which are before you, and the *abuſe* of it ſo much more enormous and puniſhable; upon which that Comminati-on of the Holy Ghoſt is grounded, *Potentes potenter tormenta patientur, The great ſhall ſuffer great Torments*; and again, *Quantum ſeſe exaltavit*, &c. *As much as he has exalted himſelf; and bin in delights, give him ſo much Torment and Grief.*

My

My Time will not allow me to inſtance in every particular advantage of your State; but give me leave to conclude this Diſcourſe with one which comprehends the reſt, and ſeems to be the property of the Nobles and Gentry, Devotion. If this be a Duty incumbent upon all Men, ſo that no State, no Circumſtance or Condition can preſcribe againſt it, *in capite Libri ſcriptum eſt de vobis*, you are the firſt in the Role, as being Emancipated from thoſe ties and incumbrances, in which the laboring, that is, the far greater part of the World is involv'd. If the Laborer, who moils all day to procure a ſmall refreſhment for his craving Appetite, or to ſupport a Family, be not excus'd upon that account, from conſecrating his Actions in the Morning by Prayer, and giving an account of them in an Evening Recollection; ſhall you be paſs'd by as *Extralineary*, who may perform that almoſt every hour of the day, which the reſt cannot but at ſet intervals, and borrowing Time from their Reſt? If that complaint, which is ſo common in every bodies mouth, *That they have not Time to ſay their Prayers*, be injurious to God, and an implicite accuſation of his Providence, as if it had not furniſh'd us means to perform the Duty it enjoyns? What name ſhall we find for thoſe falſe pretexts and fond excuſes

which

which you make, for whom that Precept ſeems to be more particularly calculated, *ſine intermiſſione orate, pray without ceaſing*? If a ſick Man complain of want of health, or a poor Man of want of Neceſſaries, he becomes an object of Compaſſion, and it would be the higheſt Barbarity to revile him for what is not in his power to avoid. But if a Man in perfect Health ſhould complain of a Diſtemper, or one ſitting at a good Table, ſhould cry he is almoſt famiſh'd, *riſum teneatis amici*? Nobody would refrain from laughter: and yet it is incomparably more abſurd for any one to complain he has not Time to pray, which he ought to be doing while he is complaining. But for thoſe who have nothing elſe to do, or at the moſt, only incident and caſual avocations, it is a ſubject of Tears, and a folly to which one would think Men of good ſenſe, of all people in the World ſhould be the leaſt ſubject. You have not time to Pray; but you have time to be Drunk; You have not time to Pray; but you have time to ſpend in idle diſcourſe, in ſcandalous and uncharitable Reflections, *in chambering and wantonneſs*. You have not time to Pray, but how many hours do you waſt in *Gaming*, when the loſs of your Mony, is the leaſt expence; and what you gain, cannot redeem, is not the price of a moment of the

the Time you loſe? O Heavens! how glad will ye be one day of half an hour, out of ſo many thouſands which dance over your heads unregarded! what would not a Damn'd ſoul give for thoſe ſcraps of Time, which you caſt away as ſuperfluous?

But certainly, *the man of buſineſs* has not Time to be devout: yet he has Time, but it ſeems not to that end; or if to that end, yet Affairs of a greater importance intervene and challenge it to themſelves. If it be ſo, the Man of buſineſs is, by neceſſity, the moſt Irreligious perſon in the world: For if you prefer any thing to your Prayers, it is an evident ſign you judge it of greater importance, which is a *Spiritual Idolatry*, poſtponing the Creator to the Creature. But if you acknowledg thoſe things you prefer to your Prayers, to be of an *Inferior order*, you are highly unjuſt. No wonder then if at thoſe few broken moments, and ends of Time, which are the Refuſe of your pleaſure, or what you miſcal, your buſineſs, when you vouchſafe to come before the Divine Majeſty with defil'd Hands, and a Mind painted all over with the imagery of of Creatures, and a Heart totally immerſed in ſenſual, if not criminal, affections; no wonder I ſay, if your Prayers are not heard, which drop from you with as ill a Grace, as Alms from the

Miſer,

Miſer, which are huddled over with as much precipitation, as if you were making an eſcape from God Almighty, which are accompanied with ſo many indignities, that you bid fair with *Jacob* for a *Curſe* rather than a Bleſſing, and fall upon your Knees, not to obtain *pardon*, but to receive *ſentence*, or rather to increaſe your *Judgment*, ſuch as the Royal Prophet wiſhes the counterfeit Repentant, *Oratio ejus fiat in peccatum*; your very Prayer becomes an additional ſin.

I know ſome will be apt to think, ſurely this Man miſtakes his Auditory, and fancies himſelf preaching in a Cloyſter, or reading Aſcetick Lectures to People wholly eſtrang'd and ſecluded from the World. But they may ſpare that thought: I know the place I fill, I know and revere my Auguſt and noble Audience; I am ſenſible I am ſpeaking, as in the moſt Awful, ſo to the moſt diſcerning, ingenious, letter'd, and judicious Aſſembly of the World. I ſpeak to a Court, to Men of Buſineſs, and whoſe Time is much taken up with weighty imployments: I ſpeak to the Flower of both Sexes; I ſpeak to Ladies, Souldiers, Philoſophers and Divines; but that is not all, I ſpeak to *Chriſtians*; and if any appear not in that Quality, I ſpeak not to them: But all who own that Character, muſt at the

the ſame time render to my Doctrin. I do not perſwade you to *relinquiſh*, but to *ſanctify* your ſtate; and certainly *Piety*, *which is profitable to all things*, is more than ordinarily *neceſſary* to them, who are ſurrounded with more than ordinary dangers, which renders Prayer more requiſite in a Court than in a Convent; Becauſe, as St. *Bernard* obſerves, Temptations there, are more ſerpentine and wily, more rife and alluring, the Pavement more ſlippery where one ſtands, the Bruiſe greater when one falls, and the Riſe more difficult when one is down. The ſame I affirm reſpectivly of every ſtate which admits of many diſtractions, and very much engages and takes up the mind; as thoſe Diſtempers need the frequenter Antidotes which recur the oftneſt, and lye heavieſt at the heart; which renders this Verity clear and beyond diſpute, That a *Monk* in his Cell is not half ſo criminal in omitting the ſolemn obligations of his Order, as a Courtier who diſpenſes with himſelf in the conſtant obſervance of Piety, how plauſible and ſpecious ſoever his pretences may be. Tell me not of the contrary Judgment of the World, *which is all plac'd in iniquity*; no Man chuſes his enemy to be his Judg. We are not to bend our Rule to the Practice or opinions of Men, but we reduce them to the Rule,

and by *that* pronounce of their Rectitude or Obliquity; *ad Legem magis et Prophetas:* We decide not matters of *Right* by matters of *Fact*, but the contrary; we judg of the Lawfulneſs of the Action by comparing it with the Law.

To conclude. The Time is *pretious*; therefore we are commanded to be watchful how every moment of it goes away, *vigilate itaq; omni tempore*: *It is ſhort*; and what follows, ſays the Apoſtle, *but that thoſe who uſe this world, be as if they us'd it not*? that is, even they who have moſt to do in the World, are to be ſo intent upon the managing their Time, that the World ſhould rather ſteal from them, than their Time. It is *the only thing we can call our own*, therefore let us preſerve it; *Fili, conſerva tempus*: but *it is ſwift*, therefore let us work while we have it, *dum habemus operemur*; but *it is evil*, therefore let us ſanctify it, *operemur bonum*; but much of it is *already waſted*, therefore let us redeem it, before our Glaſs be out: for *he that has ſworn by him who lives for ever, that Time ſhall be no more*, hath warn'd us, *that fatal Period is very neer*: *Tempus prope eſt*; This life is the time of Labor, and the ſervice of God the chief buſineſs of Man, from which no one is exempted, and they *the leaſt*, as I have ſhewn, who think they have the beſt Plea. It is in the power but of a few to conſecrate

Revel. 10.

Revel. 1.

conſecrate themſelves entirly to the ſervice of God, but to admit Temporal affairs in their Order, and range them in a ſecondary place, is the Duty of every one. It is impoſſible to debar our ſelves all Recreations and Paſtimes, but very poſſible, and even neceſſary, to chuſe thoſe which are *innocent*: The Heathen Philoſopher will not allow you others than ſuch as are *commendable* and *beneficial*: No one for his recreation is to deſcend from good Actions to bad: no one to ſpend his Time has leave to miſpend it. Let us ſum up all that has been ſaid, in the wiſe Mans advice directed to every ſtate and condition, *Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*, (Inſtanter, *with diligence and ſpeed*) *for their is no work nor device, nor knowledg, nor wiſdom in the Grave, whither thou art haſtning*: And to which I beſeech God of his infinite mercy to prepare Us all by a ſpeedy Repentance for having *miſpent* ſo much of our time, and an earneſt endeavour to *Redeem* it, *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt*; Amen.

Eccl. 9. 10.

Quo tu properas. Dulg.

FINIS.